



SPRINGFIELD—Illinois Governor Pat Quinn addressed a joint session of the Illinois General Assembly this afternoon to outline his budget proposal for the upcoming fiscal year. Senate Assistant Majority Leader Kimberly A. Lightford (D-Maywood) responded to the Governor's speech by indicating her commitment to stabilizing the state's budget and putting people back to work.

"We will have additional revenue this year and we need to make sure we use new revenue in a fiscally responsible way," Lightford said. "While there may be a need for some cuts, it's important that we protect funding for essential programs that affect working families, children, seniors, the disabled, and our most vulnerable citizens – especially during tough economic times."

Lightford expressed an open mind to budget negotiations, but noted that it would be difficult to make cuts in certain areas. She expressed specific concern over cuts to senior programs like Circuit Breaker and Meals on Wheels, in addition to programs targeted at young people like Teen Violence Prevention and school transportation. Lightford also noted the importance of education and job growth programs.

"If we're going to make a full economic recovery, we have to maintain our ability to fund education and invest in businesses that create jobs," Lightford said. "Today's speech marks the beginning of this year's budget negotiations. I respect the Governor's sincerity and I look forward to working with him and my colleagues in the legislature to craft a responsible budget this year."

Part of Governor Quinn's proposal includes a borrowing proposal to pay \$8.7 billion in unpaid bills to the State's service providers. The plan would allow the State to take out low interests loans to erase that debt. Senator Lightford expressed a willingness to negotiate.

"We desperately need to pay our debts. It will help us grow economically and provide a better climate for businesses to create jobs for Illinois citizens. We can't afford to balance the budget on the backs of students, teachers, hospitals and businesses," Lightford said. "We're going to have to work across party lines to get that done. 'No' is no longer a solution. I'm open to compromise to get the job done."